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ABSTRACT

Recent federal legislation has strengthened the role of parents in the education of their children, in school decision making, and in teacher preparation. The purpose of this study was to determine: (1) whether teacher preparation standards are aligned with current legislation related to parent partnerships; (2) if they address the direct involvement of parents in decision making within schools and teacher preparation programs; and (3) how the standards can be improved to strengthen the relationships among parents, teachers, and teacher education. Standards developed by national organizations were reviewed by three independent reviewers for each standard. Results show that of the eight sets of standards reviewed, two that affect special education teacher preparation contained the greatest number of standards related to parent partnerships. Other standards were global and provided little guidance to help users translate them into specific teacher actions and results. Few standards addressed dispositions, and fewer addressed direct participation of parents in school decision making. Several priority areas for teacher preparation were under-represented in all of the standards. Recommendations include: (1) align standards with current statutory requirements; (2) reduce ambiguity and provide operational definitions to guide teachers and teacher educators; (3) increase attention to dispositions; (4) emphasize parents' role in decision making processes within the school; and (5) establish minimum requirements for teacher education programs. (Contains 4 tables and 58 references.) (Author/SLD)

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The Quality Of National Standards for Preparing Teachers for Partnerships With Families?

Briefing Paper 1

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The George Washington University

October 31, 2002

Building Teacher Preparation Capacity through Partnerships with Families: Improving Teacher Quality
A Project of National Significance
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7/9/03

The Quality Of National Standards for

Preparing Teachers for Partnerships With Families?

Briefing Paper 1
October 25, 2002

Carol A. Kochhar-Bryant

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7/9/03

The Quality Of National Standards for Preparing Teachers
For Partnerships With Families?
Briefing Paper 1:

Carol A. Kochhar-Bryant

Abstract

Thirty years of research has shown that greater family involvement in children's learning is crucial to achieving a high quality education for all students. For students with disabilities, supportive environments in schools depend on positive relationships and communication between teachers and families and the quality of these relationships depend on the *preparation of the teachers*. Yet too few teachers are prepared to work effectively with families when they graduate and report that they struggle for years to improve these relationships. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1997, the Leave No Child Behind Act of 2001 and Title II of the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 all strengthened the role of parents in the education of their children, in school decision making, and in teacher preparation. The purpose of this study was to determine: (1) whether teacher preparation standards are aligned with current legislation related to parent partnerships; (2) if they address the direct involvement of parents in decision making within schools and teacher preparation programs; and (3) how the standards can be improved to strengthen the relationships among parents, teachers and teacher educators.

Results showed that of eight (8) sets of standards reviewed, two that affect special education teacher preparation contained the greatest number of standards related to parent partnerships. Other standards were global and provided little guidance to help users translate them into specific teacher actions and results. Few standards addressed dispositions, and fewer addressed direct participation of parents in school decision making. Several priority areas for teacher preparation that were identified in the legislation were under-represented in all of the standards. Recommendations include the following: (1) align standards with current statutory requirements; (2) reduce ambiguity, and provide operational definitions that guide teachers and teacher educators; (3) increase attention to dispositions; (4) emphasize parents' role in decision making processes within the school; and (5) establish minimum requirements for teacher education programs.

1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The past 30 years of educational research has shown that greater family involvement in the education of children is a crucial factor in achieving a high quality education. The Individuals With Education Act of 1997, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Higher Education Act greatly strengthened the role of parents in the educational process. Yet, after two decades of educational reform initiatives and a great deal of rhetoric about the importance of families as 'partners', parents of students with disabilities are still largely left out. They are left out of reform initiatives in school improvement, state improvement, and teacher education. Furthermore, while general and special education teacher educators affirm the importance of parent partnership skills, there is a disconnection between beliefs about the importance of these skills and the actual preparedness of graduates.

But if partnerships with parents of children with disabilities are recognized to be so important, then why are they so difficult to achieve? Many researchers have attributed this problem to the multiple barriers families face in participating in their schools and children's education such as insufficient time, lack of knowledge about how they can contribute, and cultural barriers. However much of the research on barriers also points to the lack of a supportive environments for parent partnerships (Epstein, Sanders & Clark, 1999; Radcliff, Malone & Nathan, 1994; Robinson & Timperley, 2000; Wright, Daniel & Himelreich, 2000). A supportive environment depends on positive relationships and communication between teachers and families. The quality of these relationships depend on the *preparation of the teachers*. Therefore, one of the single-most important barriers to parent partnerships is the lack of preparation of teachers to work with families. If we follow this sequence of logic backward, teachers aren't prepared because teacher preparation curriculum does not include content related to parent partnerships, the curriculum is not guided by teacher preparation standards, nor is teacher practice guided by teacher performance standards in the states.

It is the purpose of this study to examine the disconnection among our philosophical ideals, our statutory expectations for teacher-parent collaboration, and our professional standards for teacher preparation. The study responds to the question -- Why have so few teacher education

programs included such teacher-parent collaboration as a target skill? Several sub-questions can be asked:

1. Why have teacher educators left parents out of the discussion of how to improve teacher preparation to serve children with disabilities?
2. Why have standards for teacher preparation and accreditation of teacher education programs remained largely silent on the issue of parent-professional collaboration and the role of parents/families in teacher preparation?
3. Why have teacher educators failed to systematically infuse parent perspectives into their curriculum content?
4. Why have teacher educators failed to incorporate parent collaboration skills into their systems of teacher candidate performance? What 'dispositions' are related to these skills?
5. Why do educators at state and local levels remain so uncertain about how to define, guide and promote parent participation in education? How do we engage culturally and linguistically diverse families?
6. What are the barriers to translating current research knowledge about the importance and value of parent partnerships in teacher preparation and reform? How can we characterize these barriers from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and teacher educators' perspectives?
7. Are there successful promising practices in parent-professional collaboration in higher education?

Few teacher education programs include adequate parent-related content or prepare teachers in their clinical internships to work with parents in meaningful ways. Teachers report that they are not prepared to interact with parents in constructive ways and struggle for years to improve these relationships. A recent survey of Parent Training and Information Centers (PACER/Alliance, 2000) found that virtually no state or teacher preparation program systematically and consistently includes families in their curriculum design, implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, while family partnerships are becoming central in school improvement initiatives, teacher preparation programs and credentialing agencies fail to mention the critical role that families should play in the preparation of teachers. Parent leaders and many educators

believe that teacher preparation programs must open their doors and let families become integrally involved in curriculum design, implementation and evaluation of teacher preparation programs.

It is hoped that the findings in this first project briefing can inform policy makers about (a) the role of our national and state professional standards in preparing teachers for family partnerships; (b) the quality of those standards for preparing teachers; and (c) recommendations for improving the standards. These findings can also inform the development and implementation of preservice and continuing professional development content for initial and continuing teacher education.

2. Current Legislation Promotes Research and Advocacy for Parent Partnerships in Teacher Preparation and Reform

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA, P.L. 105-17), No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L.107-110), and the 1998 Amendments to the Higher Education Act (P.L. 105-244) share common language that strengthens the role and decision making of parents in the educational planning and decision making of their children, in local and state policy making, and in teacher preparation. Title II of the Higher Education Act addresses teacher quality and provides quality enhancement grants. Under "Allowable Use of Funds" eligible partnerships that receive grants may use such funds to "prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations, including individuals with disabilities and limited English proficient individuals, *and for involving parents in the teacher preparation program reform process*" (Sec. 201).

The 1990 and 1997 Amendments to IDEA emphasize the role of the family in planning and coordinating services for individuals with disabilities (OSEP, 1997; Wiel, Thomas, Callahan, & Carolis,1992). Specifically, the 1997 Amendments require state and local agencies to improve the ability of professionals and parents to work with youth with disabilities (IDEA, P.L. 105-17, 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq). IDEA Part D, Personnel Preparation to Improve Services and Results for Children With Disabilities (34 CFR Part 304), also strengthens the role of families. The law states that personnel preparation programs are expected to:

1. Strengthen the role of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home;
2. Establish, expand or implement interagency agreements and arrangements between local educational agencies and other agencies or organizations concerning the provision of services to children with disabilities and their families; and,
3. Increase cooperative problem-solving between parents and school personnel and promoting the use of alternative dispute resolution.

Parents are given more opportunity to participate in meetings in which the educational placement of their child is set, as well as greater involvement in the evaluation and reevaluation activities. Parents also have greater access to their children's records and deliberations over their future. State and local guidelines for coordination of services also emphasizes the role of parents in the decision making and coordination efforts, as follows:

1. Parents must be provided a stronger role in providing evaluation information for purposes of developing the IEP;
2. Reevaluations must occur at least every 3 years;
3. Initial or re-evaluation for services, change in placement or refusal to change a placement must involve notification of and consent of parents;
4. States must ensure public hearings and opportunity for comment before adopting policies/procedures to implement IDEA;
5. Majority of members of state SPED advisory panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities;
6. LEA must make available to parents all documents related to the LEAs eligibility for funding under IDEA;
7. IEP must state how often progress is to be reported to parents and students (at least as often as non-disabled students receive regular report cards);
8. Parents may participate in meetings regarding identification, evaluation and placement;
9. Parents may include other individuals in the IEP meeting who have knowledge or special expertise about their child and may examine all records (1997 Amendments to IDEA).

Under the State Improvement Grants Provision (IDEA Sec. 651), Congress found that in order for States to facilitate lasting change that is of benefit to all students, including children with disabilities, States must involve local educational agencies, *parents, individuals with disabilities and their families*, teachers and other service providers, and other interested individuals and organizations in carrying out comprehensive strategies to improve educational results for children with disabilities. An effective educational system now and in the future must (a) involve individuals with disabilities *and parents of children with disabilities in planning, implementing, and evaluating systemic-change activities and educational reforms*; (b) enhance opportunities for general and special education personnel, related services personnel, *parents, and paraprofessionals to participate in pre-service and in-service training*, to collaborate, and to improve results for children with disabilities and their families (Sec. 651). Parent training and information activities have taken on increased importance for assisting parents of children with disabilities to manage the challenges of raising such a child. Therefore, educational agencies must ensure that parents are involved not only in their children's education, but also directly in planning, decision making, and evaluation of early intervention, K-12 educational and transitional services.

The 1997 Amendments to IDEA convey two very important messages to parents and educators. First it emphasizes the importance of the parent-professional partnership and a recognition of the important relationship between parent/family participation in educational service delivery and outcomes. Second, parent perspectives are also considered valuable to professionals seeking to improve education of students with disabilities. Third, IDEA establishes the practice of including the whole family unit as well as the individual student as the target for assistance and support by schools and human service agencies.

Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act sets forth very specific expectations for school-family communication and engagement that are unprecedented. These requirements include the following.

1. Schools shall implement programs with meaningful consultation with parents.
2. The local educational agency (LEA) shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parent involvement policy.

3. This policy will describe how the LEA will involve parents in developing the process of school review and improvement.
4. The policy will describe how the LEA will build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement as described in subsection.
5. The policy will describe how parents will be involve in an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the schools served under this part, including identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by this section (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background), and use the findings of such evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary, the parental involvement policies described in this section.
6. Schools will provide parents a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.
7. Schools will provide opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.
8. School parental involvement policy will include a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.
9. The school will describe how it will address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum, parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement; frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; and reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities.
10. Schools will build capacity for parent involvement by assisting parents to understand such topics as the State's academic content standards and State student academic achievement

standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children; shall provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement.

11. Schools shall educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school.

12. Schools may involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training.

13. Schools may establish a district-wide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under this section (PL. 107-110, Leave No Child Behind Act of 2001, Part A, sec.1118, Parental Involvement).

The groundwork has been laid to move school-family partnerships beyond traditional relationships and activities to a *deeper, meaningful collaboration in the decisions, policies and practices of the schools*. The new parent related provisions in the education legislation reflects decades of research on the value of parent and family partnerships for children, for families, and for the educational process as a whole.

3. Overview of Research in Parent Participation In Teacher Preparation

As teacher education reform has gained strong national attention, the role of parents and families has also gained attention as a missing element. Research over the past two decades has shown that while teacher educators (both preservice and professional development) are increasing their 'rhetoric' about the importance of parent partnerships skills, there is little actual change in teacher preparation curriculum to prepare graduates for work with families. This has occurred partly because of the controversy that surrounds the role of parents in special education.

A significant body of literature promotes the widely held assumption that parental

partnerships are beneficial to children, parents, and the educational system (Broussard, 2000; Foster & Mantle-Bromley, 2000; Dinatale & Shore, 2000; Harvard Family Research Project, 1997; McKinney & Hocutt, 1982). While systematic studies substantiating the effectiveness of parent engagement in improving children's general education are available, studies of parental effectiveness for improving special education programs are absent. Furthermore, a bulk of the literature has focused on strategies to increase parental participation and facilitate parent-professional cooperation, rather than examining the effectiveness of such participation. According to Morrissette & Morrissette (1999), Rethinking Parent Participation in Special Education (1999), despite appearing logical and reasonable, parental participation in special education continues to be a complex and controversial issue. The dearth of systematic studies in this area compounds the problem and, subsequently, professionals are left with personal testimonials and anecdotal descriptions upon which to base their decisions of how to effectively involve parents in special education. Turnbull & Winton (1984) have contended that expecting parents to become equal participants in the decision making process sets up most, if not all, parents to fail. This arrangement also contributes to educator disillusionment when parents do not satisfy established expectations. Their research found that parents were most comfortable in assuming the role of information giving and receiving, not in the role of education decision makers, and a majority of parents defer to educators for academic decisions. More recent research and demonstration programs that involve parents in teacher preparation or prepare parents for decision making and leadership roles in schools have led to some very promising outcomes (Hiatt, 2000; Burts & Dever, 2001; Corbett & Wilson, 2000).

A balanced view of parental participation is important in order to maintain a focus on systematic research. It is also important that we do not avoid close examination of processes that can lead to conflict between parents and school personnel. Educational legislation has greatly strengthened the role of parents at all levels of educational decision making, from the child's education to state improvement councils. Agreement about the parental role is a first condition for moving from rhetoric to action in creating effective, collaborative family-school relationships at all levels.

According to many researchers in the U.S., there is powerful evidence of the relationship between parent involvement and student performance (Ammon, Chrispeels, Safran, Sandy, dear & Reyes, 2000; Ammon & Peretti, 1999; Burts & Dever, 2001; Epstein, 1991; Evans-Schilling, 1999; Katz & Bauch, 1999). An axiom that is now commonly accepted is that the extent to which a student's family is able to become involved in their children's education at school and in the community is an accurate predictor of a student's achievement. What the family does is more important to student success than family income or education. Thirty years of research show that when family and community members are directly involved in education, children achieve better grades and higher test scores (Riley, 1994; Wherry, The Parent Institute, 2001). Several researchers have described the effectiveness of various parent partnership activities aimed at enhancing school success of children (Christenson, Hurley, Sheridan, & Fenstermacher, 1997; Epstein, 1991). The benefits of parent partnerships for students include:

- more positive attitudes toward school
- higher achievement in reading
- higher quality and more grade appropriate homework
- completion of more homework on weekends
- observing more similarities between family and school (Epstein, 1991).

The benefits of parent partnerships for parents and community include:

- new ideas from school on how to help children
- learn more about educational programs and how the school works
- greater support of children
- greater confidence about ways to help children learn
- more positive views of teachers (Epstein, 1992; Henderson, 1987; Liontos, 1992).

The benefits of parent partnerships for teachers and schools include:

- improved teacher morale
- greater parent satisfaction with parents
- improved teacher perceptions of helpfulness of parents
- improved communication with parents
- improved student achievement
- parents' support of schools and bond issues (Davies, 1988; Epstein, 1992; Liontos, 1992).

Research on successful parent involvement programs shows us that effective programs are built on the following assumptions (Henderson & Raimondo, 2002; Henderson, 1987):

- The primary educational environment comes from the family.
- Parent involvement in a child's education is a major factor in improving school effectiveness, the quality of education, and a child's academic success. The benefits of parent involvement are not confined to preschool or elementary school, but extend on up through high school.
- Low-income and minority children have the most to gain when schools involve parents.

Parent activities that have been demonstrated to help improve students' achievement include strategies for working with children in the home, reading strategies at home, and parent workshops on testing strategies. However, as mentioned previously, there is an emerging new role for parents, far beyond their own child's education.

According to the Institute for Parent Leadership, as result of parents' training, their conversations about their schools change. They no longer talk about fund raising activities or helping make copies in the school office, but rather about activities that have a direct impact on student achievement. They talk about the committees they are serving on (Henderson & Raimondo, 2002). But involving parents in more substantive ways first requires a significant shift in teachers' and administrators' traditional attitudes about parents' roles. The Institute's study of 251 'fellows' -- parents in a leadership training program that prepared them to be agents of change -- found that once they began to initiate leadership activities in schools, they had to set the stage to exercise leadership. No one paved the way for them. They met with formidable obstacles as they were engaging with schools in ways very different from the traditional activities (Corbett & Wilson, 2000). However, most of them affected important changes within the school setting.

Lorenza DiNatale, parent involvement program coordinator for the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (also known as the National PTA) based in Chicago, concurs that the teacher is the key in establishing contructive parent relationships from the beginning. Furthermore, the pace of school reform has also stimulated many parents and educators to rethink the role that parents should play in schools, to become agents for the system rather than just for their own children. This has stimulated parents to form parent leadership and training

organizations, such as the Kentucky Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. In Kentucky, Wright, Daniel & Himelreich (2000) studied the extent to which Kentucky's teachers are prepared to work with families in roles as teachers, supporters, advocates and decision-makers. The study addressed institutions of higher education as well as staff development activities. Responses to the survey suggested limited preparation of teachers and administrators to work with families and a general desire for more assistance with strategies to improve relationships (p. 2).

Table 1 provides examples of the kinds of research over the past 2 decades related to teacher preparation for parent partnerships. Rather than focusing on evidence of the results or outcomes of parent engagement, most have been exploratory, focusing on parents' attitudes and perceptions, teacher attitudes and efficacy in dealing with families, content and availability of teacher preparation courses in family partnerships, and teacher frustration.

Table 1. Two Decades of Research on Teacher Preparation for Parent Partnerships

Author/Institution	Methods and sample	Key Findings
Chavkin & Williams, 1980, Southwest regional survey	Survey of 166 colleges and universities in 6 states	Between 4-15% of teacher educators taught a full or partial course on parent partnerships and 37% taught one class period on the topic.
Becker & Epstein, 1982	Survey of Teachers in Maryland	Few teachers attributed their practices of parent partnerships to knowledge gained while in their university training.
Ammon, 1990	Informal Survey of 6 University of California campuses	Few courses or classes were offered in family and school partnerships.
McBride, 1990	Study of 271 undergraduate early childhood teacher education majors	Teachers had positive attitudes about parent involvement but felt minimally prepared; 60% reported they had only one class session on the topic, and 76% recommended a full course be required in teacher preparation.
Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997.	Examination of teacher preparation content and role demands of teachers	A serious discrepancy existed between preservice preparation and the types of family partnership activities that teachers were increasingly being expected to perform in schools.
Epstein, Sanders & Clark, 1999, Center for School,	Survey of 161 schools, colleges and Departments of	All respondents believed partnership skills need improvement but few believed teacher graduates are prepared. Topics on family partnerships are

Table 1. Two Decades of Research on Teacher Preparation for Parent Partnerships		
Author/Institution	Methods and sample	Key Findings
Family and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University, 1999	Education in the U.S. that prepare general education teachers.	inadequately covered, though most schools, colleges or universities do offer a course of some content related to parent partnerships. While leaders are aware of the growing pressure to improve skills, one fourth of the respondents reported that they do not know whether there are specific state and accreditation requirements about partnerships (p. 6).
Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2000	Study of effects of an inservice teacher education program for elementary and middle school teachers to enhance parental partnerships	Participants reported gains in personal sense of teaching efficacy, beliefs about parents' efficacy to help their children learn,
McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000	Using focus groups, examined perceptions of teachers and parents about family partnerships in urban schools.	Data showed that teachers are frustrated with a lack of parental participation in literacy activities at home and at school. Parents lacked trust of teachers, believed they were biased against African American and Latino children and their families, deliberately chose not to participate in school activities, and decided to work only with teachers who respected and valued their children. Results highlighted the importance of helping new teachers learn strategies for developing strong trusting relationships and effective communication strategies when working with urban families.

Echoing decades of research about the effectiveness of parent partnerships in improving student outcomes, Richard Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education, created a Partnership of Family Involvement in Education, for the following purposes.

1. Strengthen the visibility of promising family involvement programs and training models.
2. Serve as the major support and resource network for increasing teacher and school administrator preparation in family involvement and community partnership.
3. Exercise leadership in identifying strategies to meet professional and state standards in family and community relations.
4. Disseminate assessment methods in family involvement programs and training models.

5. Highlight opportunities for families and schools to participate in instructional design and implementation of teacher preparation programs.

This initiative was grounded in the work of the Harvard Family Research Project, begun in 1991, to document the nature and scope of preservice teacher education in family 'involvement.' Several recommendations have emerged from the research. First, the field needs a national network that supports model development, provides technical assistance, and serves as a clearinghouse for information. Second, research and evaluation on the effectiveness of programs that prepare teachers to work with families will also benefit the field, as will policy guidelines that offer clearer and more comprehensive definitions of family involvement. Third, efforts should be made to encourage 'family involvement' training for teachers who will be working at all grade levels. And finally, the support of professional organizations is essential for preparing teachers, by giving legitimacy to the relatively new field of family involvement (HFRP, 1991).

Research on Standards

While educational researchers have been exploring the relationship between parent partnerships and student achievement, little attention has been paid to teacher preparation requirements. However, several initiatives are emerging from the efforts of professional associations and parent centered organizations to promulgate guidelines to promote school-family partnerships. For example, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2001) includes family involvement as a separate standard as well as a theme integrated into other standards for its professional teaching certificates. The Partners for Student Success 2000: National Summit on Parent Involvement in Teacher Education at the George Washington was the first meeting of its kind co-sponsored by the National PTA and AACTE. Also a new initiative by American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in partnership with the National Parent Teachers Association provides national training in parent and family involvement. The National Parent Teachers Association developed national standards for parent-family involvement programs, many of which were incorporated into the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act. These standards outline goals and quality indicators in 6 areas: communication, parenting, student learning, volunteering, school decision making and advocacy, and

collaboration and community. The standards also provide very specific examples of how these quality indicators can be met.

Little systematic research has been conducted on standards for preparing teachers for family partnerships. While many teachers and administrators are aware of the growing pressure to improve skills, they are not aware of the specific state and accreditation requirements about involving parents more in their children's learning. Although teacher certification requirements in about half the states mention the importance of working with families, very few states require extensive coursework or in-service training in working with families (Radcliffe, Malone, & Nathan 1994). One of the few studies of teacher competencies was conducted by Greenwood & Hankins (1989) which analyzed professional knowledge content base commonalities among ten teacher certification exams. Of 826 competencies assessed by teacher certification exams, fewer than 2% focused on the area in which parent involvement might be included. While teacher educators appear to believe family partnerships are important, there has been little effort to actually embed these skills into teacher preparation programs in either preservice or inservice training.

The Harvard Family Research Project , begun in 1991, (1) reviewed state teacher certification requirements to determine what states required in terms of course work or work experience in family 'involvement'; (2) surveyed course offerings and requirements by accredited teacher training institutions in order to establish a framework of content areas; and (3) examined promising and replicable models of preservice training in family involvement. The HFRP study was confined to an examination of national and state certification for general education teachers, surveyed general teacher education programs, and conducted case studies of teacher preparation programs for general educators. Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez (1997) of the Harvard Family Research Project, collected data to determine why training teachers to work successfully with families is so critical, and how to train teachers to work in partnership with parents and families. They confirmed three needs of teachers: (1) more direct experiences with families and communities; (2) support in making school conditions conducive to family involvement; and (3) opportunities to share successful experiences and outcomes with their colleagues. HFRP concluded that teacher preparation in family involvement lags far behind school efforts to

promote family involvement. Teacher certification requirements in the majority of states did not mention family partnerships. States whose certification requirements did allude to family partnerships often defined them in vague terms. Most teacher education programs did not offer substantial training in family involvement or partnerships (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider & Lopez, 1997, HFRP). The National Center for Education Outcomes (1997) also documented a lack of information on parent engagement and resistance of parents to new educational reforms.

Positive educational outcomes for students with disabilities depend on constructive relationships between parents and teachers. Likewise, teacher effectiveness with students with disabilities can be greatly enhanced by strong partnerships with their families. A great deal more research is needed on the capacity of teacher preparation programs to prepare prospective candidates for constructive partnerships with parents.

4. Focus of the Study

This research builds on that of the Harvard Project and others, but several differences exist. First, the 1991 Harvard study examined national standards for general education, but placed their primary focus on state standards. Since the 1991 study, national standards have been updated and revised. For example, in May, 2001 the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Special Education Sub-Committee and the Chief State School Officers Council (CSSOC) developed *Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities.* The purpose of this study was to examine these new standards. Second, this study made judgments about the quality of the standards in terms of their specificity and effectiveness to affect teacher behavior by concretely describing what the individual must know and be able to do. Third, unlike the Harvard study, this study examined standards related to the preparation of *special education teachers* in special education teacher preparation programs. Little is known about the extent to which special education standards address the preparation of teachers to work with families. The study is designed to fill that gap. The study responds to the following questions:

1. How are the standards aligned with current legislation related to parent partnerships in schools and teacher preparation?

2. Do national standards related to teacher family partnerships address the direct involvement of parents in decision making within schools?
3. Do national standards related to teacher preparation for special and general educators address expectations for working with families?
4. What is the quality of the standards for affecting teachers, teacher educators and teacher education programs?
5. How can the standards be improved to strengthen the relationships among parents, teachers and teacher educators?

5. Data Collection and Analysis

The objective of the study was to analyze national standards that affect teacher preparation programs in special education. The data collection and analysis approach was three-pronged. First, a content analysis of national standards was conducted to identify teacher competencies in family partnerships to determine if the standards identified competencies new teachers need to effectively collaborate with families. The intent was to determine whether the standards included requirements related to (1) knowledge and skill competencies needed by professionals at the preservice and inservice levels about family partnerships; (2) dispositions related to parent-professional collaboration; and (3) direct participation of parents in decision making and reform in schools, preservice institutions, and field-based professional development. Competency standards were classified as follows.

Knowledge (K) -- Content, pedagogical, or professional *knowledge*, including reflection (e.g., the teacher understands concepts, theories, history, philosophies, and models that provide the basis for building partnerships with parents).

Skills (S) -- The specific strategies, assessments, activities and events, methods, materials and technology teachers employ in working with parents.

*Dispositions (*D) -- The attitudes, values, commitments and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students and families that affect relationships with parents (e.g., the teacher respects, is sensitive to, and learns about cultural differences among families).

Once the standards related to family partnerships had been identified, and the researcher

had examined content related to knowledge, skills and dispositions, the researcher explored content related to a fourth category -- *the direct participation of parents in decision making and reform in preservice institutions, field-based professional development programs, and state leadership level.* The study of teacher dispositions toward families and direct participation of parents in decision making has received little attention in the literature.

Table 2 lists the standards that were the subject of the content analysis.

Table 2. National Special Education Teacher Preparation Standards Related to the Family Partnerships

CEC	Content Standards for All Beginning Special Education Teachers, October 2001, Developed by Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), pages 14-17.
INTASC	Interstate New Teacher Assessment Consortium (INTASC) Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities, May 2001, Developed by Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Special Education Sub-Committee, Chief State School Officers Council (CSSOC), pages 1-9.
NCATE	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Candidate Performance and Unit Standards adopted by the Unit Accreditation Board on March 31, 2000.
NCATE	Standards for Professional Development Schools, Spring 2001 Developed by National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, page 12.
TEAC	Teacher Education Accreditation Council, Quality Principle I, Evidence of Student Learning, and Quality Principle II, Evidence of Valid Assessment of Student Learning and Caring.

CEC	Content Standards for All Beginning Special Education Teachers, October 2001, Developed by Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), pages 14-17.
NBPTS	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS standards will include Early Childhood/Generalist, ages 3-8 ; Middle Childhood/Generalist standards, Early Adolescence/Generalist; and Early Childhood Through Young Adulthood/ Exceptional Needs Specialist Standards, March 2001, page 9-10.
NAEYC	Program Standards for Initial and Advanced Programs in Early Childhood Education, September 1994, Developed by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), pages 10-12.
ISLLC	Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, Standards for School Leaders, November 1996, Developed by Chief State School Officers Council (CSSOC), pages 13-14.

Second, standards were identified related to direct parent/family participation in decision making in the schools, or in the preparation of teachers. In other words, did any of the standards address the direct collaboration and engagement of parents/families in the teacher education processes.

Third, qualitative judgments were made about the quality, or 'powerfulness,' of the standard to impact change in teacher behavior, teacher educator behavior, and teacher preparation curriculum. In other words, the power of the standards refers to its degree of specificity and overall usefulness in providing guidance and affecting individual behavior or organizational change. A prestructured review of all standards documents identified in Table 2 was conducted, after which the orienting construct of 'power' of the standards was defined. To further inform the definition of 'quality' or 'powerfulness', the researcher consulted several definitions of 'standards' currently in use. These included standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, May 2000), International Society for Technology in

Education Technology Standards, Kentucky State Department of Education Teaching Standards, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, National Council for accreditation of teacher Education, and the U.S. Department of Education. A synthesis and adaptation of these operational definitions led to the following definition:

> *Quality standards emphasize results as well as processes. They concretely describe what an individual or organization must know and be able to do. They require reflection and are explicit about expected change in knowledge, skills, and dispositions (K,S,D). It is clear which standards are required, encouraged or optional.*

Based on this definition, each standard was examined by three independent reviewers, with the following questions in mind:

- Is the standard clearly worded and is it understandable?
- Does the standard emphasize results or expected change in behavior (K,S,D)?
- Does the standard provide specific guidance for the teacher?
- Can the standard be easily demonstrated within the normal routine of a teacher?
- Is the standard required, encouraged, or optional?

Three categories were developed to guide the judgments about the quality of each set of standards, based on the definition above. Standards considered to be the most 'powerful' in their potential to affect change and improvement in teachers' ability to work with families were labeled 'Level A'. Level B and C standards were considered to be less powerful because they lacked clarity, did not emphasize results or expected change in behavior, were unlikely to be easily demonstrated within the normal routine of a teacher, and it was unclear if the standard was required or optional. Table 3 defines these three categories.

Table 3. Typology for Judging Quality of Standards			
	Level A	Level B	Level C
Definition of the standard	It describes an action, behavior or event that is *required* to be performed.	It describes an action, behavior, or event that is *suggested, but optional*.	It is a general statement of principle, broad goal, or statement of understanding; it is not clear whether it is required or optional.
Language is results-oriented	Written in very specific terms that describe expected results and observable behavior (e.g., "demonstrates, communicates in writing, meets with"). Concrete examples are provided.	Written in specific terms, but may not be observable (e.g., "involves, works with, facilitates, applies"). No examples are given.	Written in very general, broad, global terms (e.g., "believes in, values, is committed to, under-stands diversity of delivery systems". No suggested actions or behaviors are provided.

6. Results

A total of 350 standards were reviewed from 8 organizational clusters. While almost a third of the standards did refer to families in some way, only about 31% of those were judged to be 'level A' standards. All of these were CEC and INTASC standards. Other sets of standards, such as the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), contained many standards related to families, but all fell into the 'level C' category. Of the family-related standards, dispositions represented only 15% and standards related to parent participation in decision making in schools and teacher education programs represented only 2%.

Table 4 summarizes findings regarding the total number of standards reviewed, total family-related standards identified, the quality ratings, and standards identified that were related to 'dispositions' and 'parent decision making' in schools and teacher preparation programs.

Table 4. Summary of Results

Standards	Competency standards (see Appendix for full text of standards)	Total Stands.	Family Related	Level A	Level B	Level C	Decision Making	Dispo-sitions
CEC, Common Core for Beginning Teachers	Seven of the ten (10) general clusters of standards (with numerous sub-standards) mention parent involvement. One standard addresses the participation of parents in decision making at the school level. Three addressed dispositions.	112	31	15	10	0	1	3
INTASC	Ten (10) "principles," or standards, are outlined, followed by knowledge, skills, and dispositions (sub-standards) needed for both general education and special education teachers for each principle. Seven of these related to parent partnerships. The 10 standards are comprehensive and well written.	96	25	17	8	0	1	3
NCATE Candidate Perfor-mance/Unit standards	Of the six (6) Unit standards addressing the effectiveness of an institute of higher education, only three address parent l partnerships.	15	3	0	2	1	0	2
NCATE Profes-sional Develop-ment Schools	These were brief and general standards. All fall into the Level 3 category because they were broad generalized statements that lack specific descriptions of behavior, outcomes, or examples. Two standards address direct participation of parents in decision making at the school level.	21	9	0	9		0	2
TEAC, Quality Principles I & II, Student Learning	Includes 3 Quality Principles that serve as broad, flexible, non-prescriptive guidelines for teacher preparation institutions. The institutions drive the curriculum and therefore there were no specific standards related to teacher-parent partnerships.	9	----	----	----	----	----	---
NBPTS	These standards for Teachers of Exceptional Needs Students are broadly written.	17	9	0	0	9	0	0
ISLLC	These standards address the preparation of school administrators.	18	6	0	4	2	0	2
NAEYC Initial programs	These standards for teachers of young children are broadly written.	62	19	0	0	19	0	3
	TOTAL	350	102	32	33	31	2	15

7. Discussion and Recommendations

Quality of the standards. *All of the standards related to families provide a good springboard for advancing the role of families in education and teacher preparation.* INTASC and CEC standards aimed at preparing teachers to work with students with disabilities had the greatest number of standards that addressed parent partnerships. Over half of them were judged to be level A, which meant that the standard described an action, behavior or event that is *required* to be performed and is written in very specific wording that describes observable behavior. The other half were placed in the level B category because, although they described an action, behavior, or event, they were suggested or *optiona*l, and were *not observable*. In contrast, most other standards sets were judged primarily to fall into Level C -- the standard describes an action, behavior or event without indicating whether required or optional, and it is written in very general, broad, global terms. The Appendix contains the text of extracted standards related to parent participation.

Many INTASC and CEC standards could be strengthened for clarity, specificity and a clear message that they are not optional standards. Standards can provide better guidance to teachers and teacher educators if they include progress indicators, information on how the performance can be demonstrated, examples or vignettes to illustrate the desired behaviors or skills, and expected outcomes or results. A few examples may be helpful. The following knowledge standard – *"Special education teachers seek to understand how having a child with disabilities may influence a family's views of themselves as caregivers and as members of their communities*" -- does not provide help to users of the standards to translate them into specific teacher actions and results. The following standard addresses a disposition: *"Candidates recognize when their own dispositions may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so.*" This sounds good, but it is unclear what it means or how one would 'recognize their dispositions.' The third example, which addresses skills –(Special educators collaborate with families and other colleagues to assure non-biased, meaningful assessments and decision-making) –, provides little guidance to the teacher.

The final example is so broad that it is virtually impossible to translate it into behavior or actions without additional information – *"...students vary in the degree and kind of support they receive at home for their school work (effects of culture, language, and parental education,*

income). Teachers are alert to these effects and tailor their practice accordingly to enhance student achievement. However, when faced with an unavoidable conflict, the teacher must hold the interest of the student and the purposes of schooling paramount." The standards would be much more helpful if examples of actions that would help them achieve the standard were provided, or what the user might do with that knowledge to improve parent relationships.

Developers of standards may argue that if we attach so much information to the standards, the documents would become much too unwieldy. Others argue that the standards are voluntary and provide broad parameters for teacher education or teacher behavior. Broad discretion is given to teacher educators to decide how the curriculum will respond to the standards and how students' performance should be assessed to achieve them. However, research has shown that few teacher education programs are actually explicitly teaching to these standards related to family partnerships. School administrators lament that teachers graduate with little preparation to work with families. Educational statutes have increased expectations for schools and teacher education programs to strengthen such partnerships.

So what recommendations can be made to better align teacher preparation program with the standards? This phase of the study supports several preliminary recommendations.

1. Greatly *reduce the ambiguity* in the standards. Provide more operational definitions that help teachers translate broad statements into processes and behaviors and how they can be demonstrated in schools and communities.
2. Increase attention to *dispositions*, the competencies that drive personal and institutional change.
3. Emphasize the *importance* of parent-related requirements and how parent relationships can impact all other school related goals for students.
4. Emphasize parents' role in *decision making processes* within the school.
5. Pull out family- related standards that are embedded and lost within other broader, more global standards, so that they hold greater status and focus.
6. For standards and guidelines that provide broad discretion to teacher education programs in their curriculum content, establish *minimum requirements* that address parent partnerships (e.g., "accredited schools, colleges and departments of education should……").

7. For standards and guidelines that affect preservice teacher education programs, establish specific requirements for the participation or engagement of parents of individuals with disabilities in the curriculum development, implementation, review and evaluation processes. For example, 'unit' standards (for teacher preparation programs) that address clinical internships, faculty qualifications and collaboration should also address the experience of students and faculty with parents and families of children with disabilities.
8. For standards and guidelines that affect inservice or continuing professional development programs, establish specific requirements for the participation or engagement of parents of individuals with disabilities in the curriculum development, implementation, review and evaluation processes

Dispositions in the standards. While dispositions are often the *core drivers for personal and institutional change,* relatively few standards (15% of all family-related standards) addressed this area of teacher competence. As described earlier, dispositions refer to attitudes, values, commitments and professional ethics that influence teacher behaviors toward students and families and affect relationships. The dispositions identified include the following:

- Special education teachers share the values and beliefs underlying special education services for individuals with disabilities in the United States with students, families, and community members, and seek to understand ways in which these are compatible or in conflict with those of the family and community. They work closely with families to establish mutual understanding of the student's educational goals, performance, and meaningful contexts for intervention (INTASC).

- Special education teachers reflect on their personal biases and the influences of these biases on the instruction they provide students with disabilities, and on the interactions they have with other personnel, families and the community (INTASC).

- Special education teachers understand the impact that having a child with a disability may have on family roles and functioning at different point in the life cycle of a family (INTASC).

- All teachers accept families as full partners in planning appropriate instruction and services for students with disabilities, and provide meaningful opportunities for them to participate as partners in their children's instructional programs and in the life of the school (INTASC).

- [Teachers] recognize and respect cultural diversities that exist in some families with persons with exceptionalities (CEC).

- [Teachers] advocate for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families (CEC).

- [Teachers] reflect on their practice and make necessary adjustments to enhance student learning. They know how students learn and how to make ideas accessible to them. They consider school, family, and community contexts in connecting concepts to students' prior experience, and applying the ideas to real-world problems (NCATE- Accreditation).

- [Teachers] affirm and respect culturally and linguistically diverse children, support home language preservation, and promote anti-bias approaches through the creation of learning environments and experiences (TEAC).

- [Teachers] respect parents' choices and goals for children and communicate effectively with parents about curriculum and children's progress (NAEYC).

- [Teachers] demonstrate sensitivity to differences in family structures and social and cultural backgrounds (NAEYC).

- [Teachers] serve as advocates on behalf of young children and their families, improved quality of programs and services for young children, and enhanced professional status and working conditions for early childhood educators (NAEYC).

- The administrator believes in, values and is committed to the inclusion of all members of the school community (ISLLC).

Attitudes, beliefs and ethics greatly influence and shape teachers' relationships with families and what is communicated to parents. These competencies are often crucial to establishing and improving family relationships and they drive collaborative processes. The teacher's role in parent collaboration is central. Teacher educators often assume that teachers and administrators implicitly support parent participation in the schools and fail to help them examine their own attitudes. Many teachers have never had an opportunity to evaluate their values, beliefs and ethics related to working with parents. Many past experiences with parents have contributed to the development of negative attitudes and beliefs toward parents that impede constructive relationships. For example, a teacher may believe that all low income children have parents who do not care, do not want to help children with their homework, or dislike the parental role. These biased beliefs can greatly influence and shape the teacher's relationship with the parent, what is

communicated to the parent, and their motivation to communicate. Important dispositions identified in the literature and in the statues (IDEA and NCLB) for preparing teachers to improve parent-professional collaboration include the following:

a. Ability to self-assess attitudes and beliefs about parent participation in education.
b. Ability to empathize with parents of children with disabilities. For example, teachers should (1) recognize and respond to parent's needs for assurance that they should not feel guilty about their child's disability; (2) accept their feelings about families without labeling and accept them as people, rather than as 'categories (poor, immigrants, migrants; (3) help them see the positive aspects of the future and recognize both the joys and challenges of raising a child with disabilities; and (4) assist parents to find programs, services, and financial resources to allow them to parent effectively and with dignity.
c. Awareness of the family's environment and factors that can affect parent-professional collaboration such as family resources; family's lifestyle; child rearing practices; type and severity of the disability; number of children in the family; the age differences between children in the family; and quality of the support services available in the community.
d. Ability to support the parents' rights and responsibilities and adopt the role of advocate.
e. Ability to move beyond knowledge of what collaboration involves, to develop the skills and attitudes required for effective collaborative leadership.
f. Ability to examine their interpersonal and group leadership skills.
g. Ability to reflect on cultural issues that affect parent-professional relationships.
h. An appreciation of the importance of the parent role in leadership, school improvement, and system coordination at the local level that is now required of schools.
i. An appreciation of the importance of the parent role in system coordination among state level programs that is now required of the states.

Direct participation in decision making. Very few standards (2% of all family-related standards) address direct participation of parents in teacher education or school decision making, beyond decisions affecting their children. This is surprising since parent partnerships have become codified in several national education laws. Standards that addressed participation in decision making include the following:

- They involve families as partners in the assessment and eligibility/placement process, including when planning assessments, gathering information and making decisions (INTASC).
- Special education teachers include, promote, and facilitate family members as partners on parent-professional, interdisciplinary, and interagency teams (INTASC).
- The Professional Development School (PDS) participants include arts and sciences faculty, family members, and members of the community (NCATE- Professional Development Schools).
- PDS partners engage family members in focusing on identifying students' needs. family members are fully informed as stakeholders in PDS work (NCATE- Professional Development Schools)

These kinds of professional development standards promote the direct participation of parents in *decision making and reform in preservice institutions, field-based professional development programs, and state leadership level*. While previous studies have focused on how to prepare teachers to work with families, they have not asked – how do we involve parents and families directly in the process of restructuring needed in the Institution of Higher Education (IHE)? Teacher and teacher educator competencies related to parent participation in decision making and reform include abilities to do the following:

a. Promote direct participation of parents in the development and reforms in the preservice institution, such as review of curriculum, participation in program restructuring, parent advisory councils, co-teaching, participation in student field-based internships involving families.
b. Promote direct participation in decision making about field-based professional development programs at the state and local levels.

c. Promote participation of parent advocates and representatives in the State Advisory Council, the State Transition Coordinating Council, the Statewide System of Personnel Development Councils, and the SIG evaluation task forces.
d. Promote parent participation in local evaluation of services.
e. Promote participation of parents in local school advisory groups, educational planning and state and local systemic reforms.

The goal of improving access and progress of students with disabilities in general education and standardized assessments depends on teachers' competence in working closely with parents. It requires a deeper level of awareness of parents' perspectives and how they can help inform teaching and learning. Teachers need to answer very explicitly the questions – Why is it important that parents be key stakeholders in educational decisions? What can their perspectives add? How can an appreciation of their perspectives empower teachers? How do we turn conflicts that may arise between teachers and parents into constructive relationships?

Some teacher preparation programs, through their State Improvement processes and in collaboration with the Parent Training Institutes, have already begun to infuse instructional modules about family centered practice into preservice teacher education programs. For example, in Rhode Island there are plans to develop a module with 6 topics: (a) understanding the functions and roles of families and school personnel within the family centered paradigm; (b providing meaningful information to families; (c) supporting families in decision making; (d) supporting the self-determination of families and children; (e) helping families function better and achieve positive outcomes; (f) helping families manage change and transitions (National Coalition for Parent Involvement, 2001).

Relationship to statutory requirements. There are several priority areas for preservice and inservice professional competencies that were very under-represented in all of the standards. These include: (a) promoting parent participation and student self-determination; (b) supporting constructive dispute resolution (or alternative dispute resolution), systems to improve relationships between educators and parents; (c) helping school districts build capacity to improve the IEP process through increased skills in facilitation of IEP meetings; (d) supporting the alignment of secondary curriculum and transition services and promoting parent participation in

transition planning; (e) promoting parent participation in improving transition from early intervention (Part C) to Part B services; and (f) engaging parents in preservice and continuing professional development.

In general for all standard sets, there is a need to re-think the family partnerships content and align them with statutory requirements in IDEA and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The NCATE standards are being revised to reflect a performance model, therefore IHEs need to carefully look at their student/candidate performance assessment. Greater attention to standards is needed as teacher education programs incorporate parent collaboration skills into systems of teacher candidate performance. This aspect will be more closely examined in Briefing 2.

9.Conclusions: The Case for a Paradigm Shift In Teacher Preparation for Parent Collaboration

With so much research evidence of the importance of parent partnerships in education, why has there been so little response from the teacher education community? What are we missing? The answers to these questions demand that we *examine our core beliefs about the role and importance of parents as partners in the teacher preparation process*. Educating teachers for 'family involvement' in their children's education is only a part of the process that needs to occur. A paradigm shift is needed in teacher education. Engaging parents *directly in the process of teacher preparation* assumes a much more essential and consequential role for parents in the teacher education restructuring process. It is based on the assumption that implies that parents should be an essential part of the cultural change process in teacher education. While previous studies have focused on how to prepare teachers to work with families, they have not asked – how do we involve parents and families directly in the process of restructuring needed in the IHE? How can they be part of the cultural change that must occur – in curriculum content, in how student performance is assessed, how student dispositions must be shaped, and in how student internships are conducted? How do we overcome the biases that teacher educators and administrators may have about involving parents in the decision making processes? How we directly engage parents in teacher education is a social and political issue. Answers are needed to how we can achieve a paradigm shift in teachers' and teacher educators' perspectives on the role

of parents, reform their attitudes and belief systems (dispositions) and achieve structural reforms.

It is necessary to continue to define the beliefs and principles under which we are we operating, and from which we can judge the adequacy of the standards that guide teacher preparation. There is a close interconnection between these principles and the standards – if we believe in the importance of parent partnerships, then our professional standards should reflect it. Professional organizations that develop standards for teacher preparation have incorporated parent collaboration to varying degrees. For example, the National Board for Professional Teaching standards includes 'family involvement' as a separate standard. In order to judge the adequacy of standards that guide the preparation of teachers of students with disabilities, we need to view them in terms of (1) teacher competency as well as (2) direct parent/family participation in teacher education reforms. Structural reforms may include engaging parents of student with disabilities in advisory committees of the teacher preparation program, co-teaching in college courses, helping review or revise curriculum, participating in developing student internship opportunities with families. In terms of teacher competency, we need to understand how parent collaboration skills are developed in new teachers – how are they being prepared for such collaboration, what knowledge and skills they need and how should they be taught and learned. Teacher candidate skills that have not yet been adequately addressed --- and are the most difficult to change – include teacher candidates' attitudes and belief systems (dispositions) that are the foundation for achieving structural reforms. For example, while many teachers believe that there is a connection between family participation and student achievement, they are not confident in their ability, nor are certain of their role in motivating parents to become involved (Epstein, 1991).

Teacher preparation for family partnerships is one of the most potentially effective methods of reducing barriers to home-school partnerships (Evens-Schilling, 1999; Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). Yet the work of creating meaningful parent collaboration means moving beyond the goal of expanding 'family involvement training.' It begins with basic reforms in teacher preparation programs themselves. It begins with the hard work of actively engaging parents in the decision making processes in teacher preparation programs. Our greatest challenge is to help candidates and their professors explore and reexamine their attitudes and dispositions

about their own role in developing parent collaboration and what it means to work side by side with parents in the IHE as well as in the schools.

Closing

Special education reform and improvement depends on the strength of intense, shared commitments among teacher candidates and teacher educators to learn about family partnerships, and to the ongoing assessment of these efforts. Without a shared vision of what teachers need to know and do, reform will not be sustained. Unfortunately 'parents and families' are typically left out of the reform 'equation'. The creative work of developing the necessary competencies in teachers must include the skills to improve communication with parents and engage them meaningfully in the educational development of their children and in the reform processes in schools. Parent leaders and many educators believe that teacher preparation programs must open their doors and let families become integrally involved in curriculum design, implementation and evaluation of teacher preparation programs. A national dialogue is needed to define the responsibility of national accreditation and professional standards organizations, state licensing and accreditation units and boards, and local professional development entities to ensure meaningful participation of parents, students and individuals with disabilities in the quality of personnel and educational improvement processes. The family is a crucial element of the student's community context of the school, and is therefore, essential to creating and sustaining a common vision and commitment.

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